

Research on Sexual Violence Suffered by Men in France

Power Related Relations, Pathways of Violence and Life Course

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- Introduction
- Data and methods
- Main results and structure of the thesis
- Power dynamics between boys and older men who assault them
- Conclusion

TW: Sexual Violence

Introduction



Introduction

- Child Abuse (Finkelhor, 1984; Dube *et al.*, 2005; Senn, Carey and Vanable, 2008; Font, 2013)
 - Violence against boys
 - Not only sexual violence
 - Rarely male-specific
- Sexual violence as a risk factor
 - HIV infection (Brennan *et al.*, 2007; Mimiaga *et al.*, 2009; Lloyd and Operario, 2012)
 - Health issues (Paul *et al.*, 2001; Roustit *et al.*, 2009; Friedman *et al.*, 2011)
 - Becoming a perpetrator (Hanson and Slater, 1988)
 - Contexts of violence? Power relatd relations?
- In France, no in-depth studies on men report sexual violence
 - Sexual violence against men on specific contexts, as war rape (Pape, 2013) or in jail (Ricordeau, 2004)
 - Not a gender approach

VIRAGE: last quantitative survey (Brown *et al.*, 2020)

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Rape and sexual assault in France: initial findings of the VIRAGE survey

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How common are rape and other forms of sexual assault in France today? In what contexts, and at what ages do they occur? In 2015, the French Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) conducted a large-scale survey of violence and gender relations (Violence et rapports de genre, VIRAGE), on a large sample of respondents representative of the French population aged 20-69. Their answers to the survey questions provide a detailed picture of the sexual violence experienced by women and men in France.

Sexual violence has become more visible thanks to feminist activism and scientific surveys.[1] It is difficult to measure, however, as the acts involved and the contexts in which they occur are very diverse and can be qualified under a variety of legal definitions. The VIRAGE survey (Violence et rapports de genre; [Violence and Gender

what acts are covered by these terms. The survey asked about "sexual relations under constraint" (ACSF), "forced sexual relations", "attempts" or "sexual touching" (Baromètre Santé, 2000; Enveff, 2000; EVS, 2005-2006; CSF, 2006; CVS, 2010-2015⁽²⁾).

The VIRAGE survey, following on from the ENVEFF

Table 2. Percentages of victims of sexual violence over their lifetime, by life space

Life space	Rape and attempted rape		All forms of sexual violence ⁽¹⁾	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Family and social circle	1.61	0.32	5.00	0.83
School or university	0.20	0.04	1.38	0.49
Partner ⁽²⁾	1.39	0.03	1.91	0.31
Workplace	0.06	0.00	1.79	0.57
Public spaces and other	0.90	0.27	7.85	2.19
All life spaces	3.72	0.61	14.47	3.94

Source: Hamel, C. *et al.* (2016) 'Rape and sexual assault in France: initial findings of the VIRAGE survey', *Population & Societies*, (538), 4 p. [See here](#)


Introduction

- Sexual violence against women
 - More frequent
 - All life spaces throughout life
- Sexual violence against men
 - Before age 18 in $\frac{3}{4}$ of cases
 - Mainly before adulthood
 - *Continuum* of violence (Kelly, 1987) does not apply

- Objectives of this thesis
 - To examine the specificity of sexual violence against men, compared to women (GBV)
 - Conditions where sexual violence is committed
 - Its perception by men
 - Process of qualifying violence as such
 - Process of breaking the silence (speaking out)
 - Power relations related to gender, age and sexuality

Data and Methods

Mixed methods research: two quantitative data surveys and fifty biographical interviews



- Context of the Sexuality in France (CSF) in 2006 (Bajos, Bozon, 2008)
 - Representations and practices related to sexuality and gender
 - More than 10,000 men and women
 - Two questions abouts sexual violence (more if they say yes)
 - Relation to sexuality norms and gender norms

- Violence and Gender Relations (VIRAGE, 2015)
 - French Institute of Demographic Studies
 - Almost 16,000 women and 12,000 men
 - Representative of the French population aged 20-69
 - Life spaces, 12 months and lifetime
 - “Violence” or “assault” never used: descriptions purely factual

Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents (and their partner's), life history

Everyone

Health

Everyone

Violence within school or university

Have been in education for the past 12 months

Violence within the workspace

Have worked for the past 12 months

Violence within public spaces

Everyone

Violence by a partner

Have been in a relationship for 4 months in the past 12 months

Violence by an ex-partner

Have experienced a separation and been in contact with an ex-partner in the past 12 months

Violence within the family or close social circle

Everyone

Violence within other spaces, outside the family

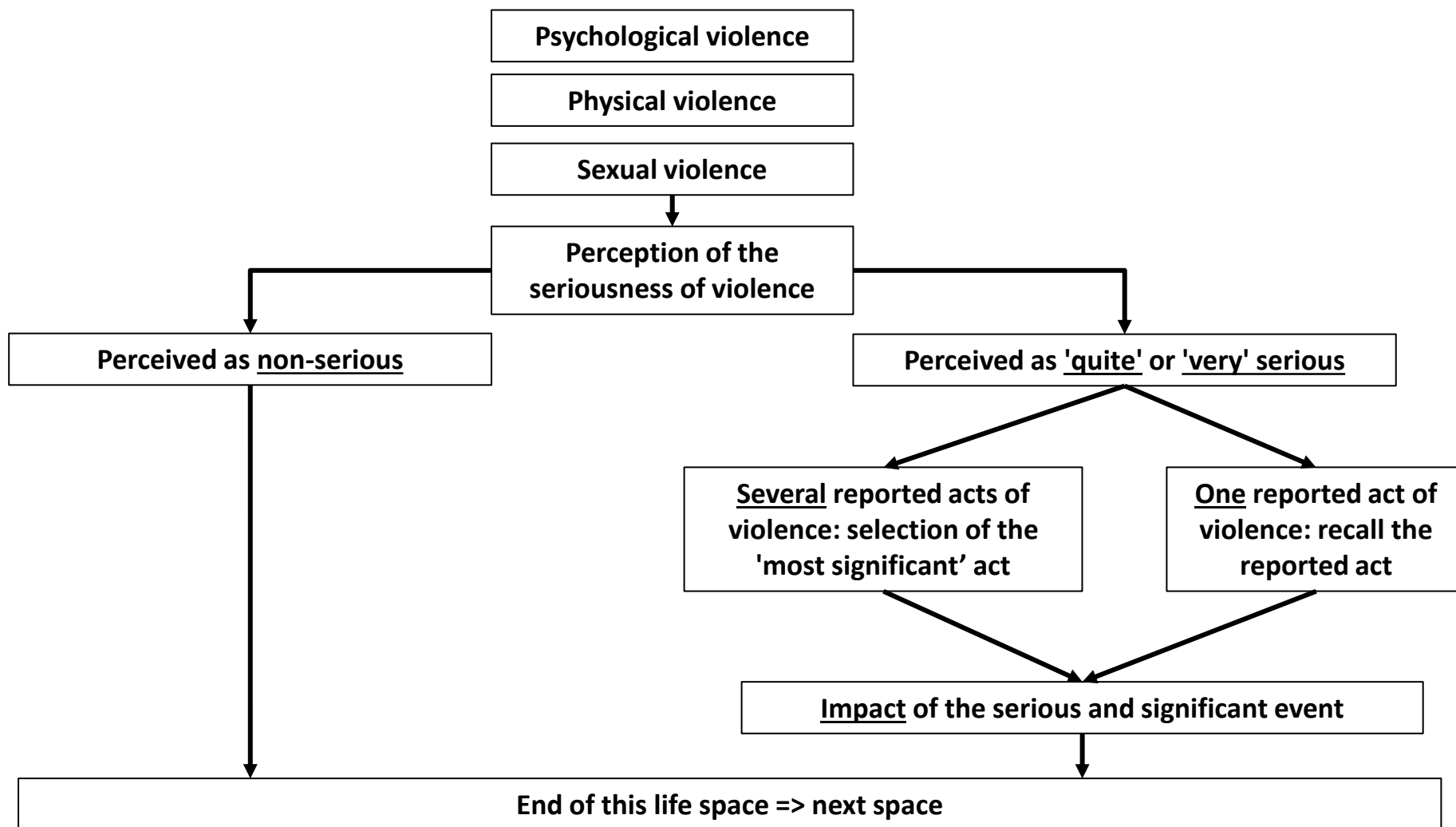
Everyone

Violences in the past 12 months

Violence in the last 12 months and lifetime

Lifetime violence (excl. 12 months)

Data and Methods



- Three questions to record all facts (rape, attempted rape and other sexual assaults)
 - Question 1, for **women**: “Has anyone, against your will, touched your breasts or your buttocks, cornered you in order to kiss you, rubbed or pressed against you?”
 - Question 1, for **men**: “Has anyone, against your will, rubbed or pressed against you?”
 - Question 2, for **both sexes**: “Has anyone forced you to perform or submit to sexual touching, and has anyone attempted to have sexual intercourse with you against your will, or succeeded in doing so?”
 - Question 3, for **both sexes**: “Has anyone ever forced you to engage in other sexual acts or practices?”
- To construct ex post indicators of violence according legal categories
- Questions about violence declared (frequency, age, perpetrator...)

- On my thesis, with VIRAGE survey
 - Typologies of violence
 - Isolate the contexts of sexual violence against men
 - To study the power related relations (gender, age, sexuality, class)
 - Description of sociodemographic characteristics
 - Description of health
 - Description of childhood context
 - Follow-up interviews of the quantitative survey with men who agreed to leave their contact details

- **Biographical interviews**

- 2019-2021: fifty interviews by phone

- Follow-up interviews of VIRAGE survey

- Men who reported experiences of sexual violence during their life
 - Principally on family and close social circle, and other spaces (incl. public spaces)
 - A large sample of male victims
 - Diversity of experiences of sexual violence
 - Diversity of sociodemographic profiles (≠ contacts from support services)

Data and Methods

- Method of interviews
 - Presented as focusing on life course, difficult events and situation of vulnerability
 - Conducted using an interview guide and a biographical table
 - Structure of interview
 - Childhood and living conditions in childhood
 - Conjugalité
 - Sexualité
 - Studies and work
 - Health
 - Norms to violence, gender and sexuality
 - If violence is not mentioned at that moment, direct question
 - Feelings at the end of interview and contacts of NGOs or support services

Année	Âge	Violences sexuelles						Autres violences
		Violences sexuelles	Remarques	Période crenne - qualification	Enonciation	Situation - réception	Recours	
2020								
2019	30							
2018	29							
2017	28						procès	"difficile" à huit clos
2016	27							
2015	26							
2014	25			"viol"	mère conjoint	++	plainte	Flashs lors d'un rapport sexuel
2013	24							
2012	23							
2011	22							
2010	21			"dén"				
2009	20	Chantage pour RS	Conjoint					"devoir conjugal" VP réparation
2008	19							
2007	18							
2006	17	Viol	Frère (25ans)					"initiation sexuelle" ↳ conso alcool
2005	16							
2004	15							
2003	14							
2002	13							
2001	12							

- **Biographical interviews**

- 50 men (who declare sexual violence in VIRAGE survey)

- Only 32 mentioned facts of sexual violence

- + 22 described the fact as sexual violence

- Understand what is a (sexual) violence for a man

- + Why some of them don't speak about violence during interviews?

- **Analyses**

- Thematic approach

- Textual analysis

- Life course analysis: qualitative approach, graphical graphs, optimal matching analysis

Data and Methods

- Thinking about ethical issues
 - Using phone for interviews
 - To protect myself
 - To protect anonymity of men
 - Consequences of this research (Campbell and Adams, 2008; Campbell *et al.*, 2010)
 - Phone to protect men's integrity
 - A second interview: ask the impact of the first one
 - Do not any interviews during the lockdown
 - Dangerous for the mental health
 - Emotionally demanding
 - Without possibility of debriefing or taking your mind off things
 - Difficult to be alone
 - Emotional work (Hochschild, 2003) in interviews, but even more after (transcription, writing)
 - Listening to the stories of intense violence
 - Sexist and gender stereotyped discourses
 - A research practice analysis group with other PhD students, supervised by a psychologist, against secondary trauma (Williamson *et al.*, 2020)

Main results and structure of the thesis



Main results and structure of the thesis

- A thesis in France: 400/500 pages long (100,000/125,000 words)
- Three parts
 - Definition of the object, methodological and ethical analysis
 - Analysis of the power related relations, pathways of violence
 - Biographical analysis of pathways of violence and their inclusion in life course of men

- Object and methodology
 - Discuss the categories of analysis used and mobilised in GBV studies
 - What is considered as violence by men?
 - What constitutes violence for interviewed men and what forms must take the violence for men to identify it as violence?
 - What is record in a quantitative survey and in qualitative interviews?
 - Reflection about methodological and ethical issues of the practice of research on violence suffered by men (and in general)

Main results and structure of the thesis

- Pathways of violence and power relations
 - Gender and age domination of older adult men
 - Practices of silencing and breaking it

Process of **qualification** violence as such

Saying oneself the violence when it was not identified as such before (encouraged by other persons or institutions)

Process of **enunciation**, **speaking out**

Going beyond oneself to tell someone, successive statements that tell the experience of violence

Process of **denunciation**

Public denounce of violence (media, autobiography, social networks, police, etc.)

Main results and structure of the thesis

- Pathways of violence according to the entire biography
 - Family, domestic, sexual, professional and health pathways
 - Life courses in their socio-historical context
 - Life courses, according to the power related relations
 - Between men themselves (masculinities)
 - Relations between gender norms, sexuality norms and violence
 - Can we say that violence has an impact on the way they conceive of them gender, gender in general, on representations and practices of sexuality and violence?

Power dynamics between younger and older individuals

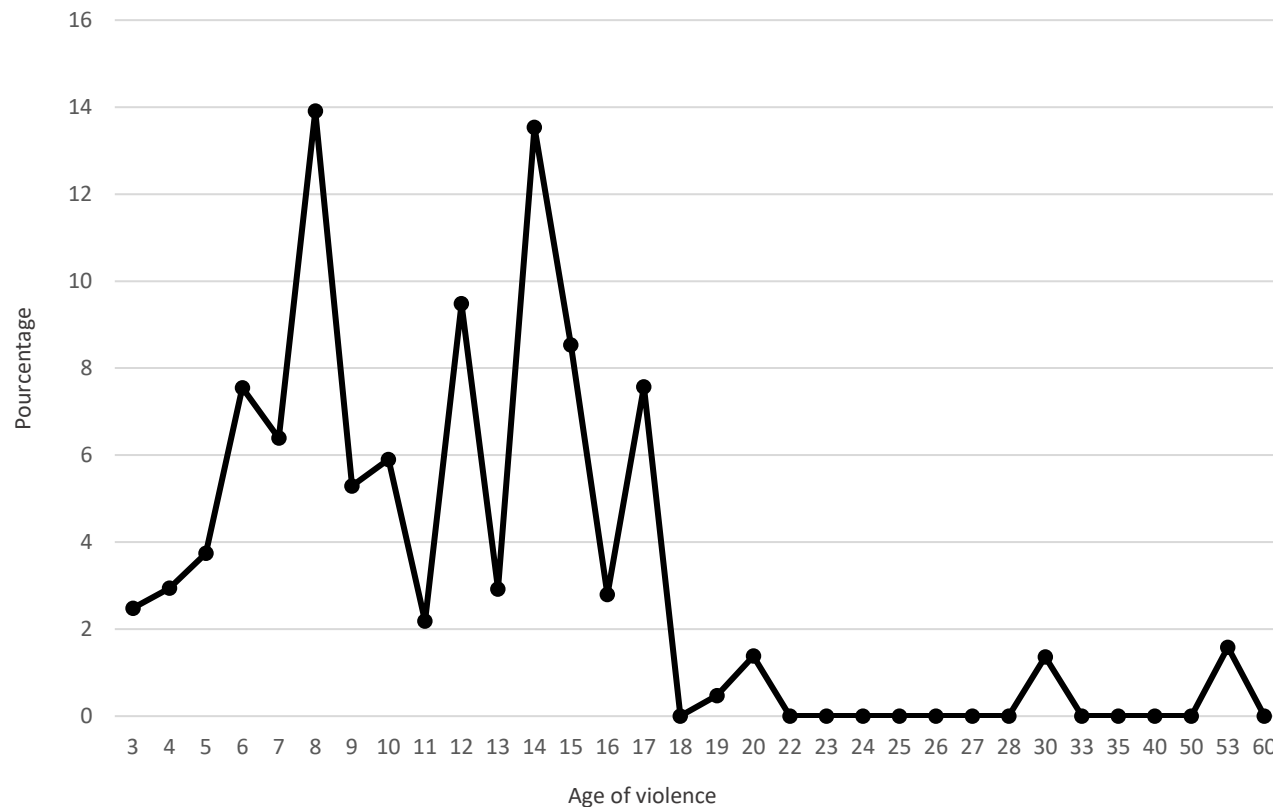
One result of my research

A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner of the slide, consisting of several overlapping, curved, light gray shapes that resemble stylized waves or concentric arcs.

Different forms of age domination according to age of violence

- Temporality of violence: structuring the contexts

Figure 1: Age distribution of sexual violence experienced by men (%)



Source: Ined, Virage survey, 2015. Weighted percentages.

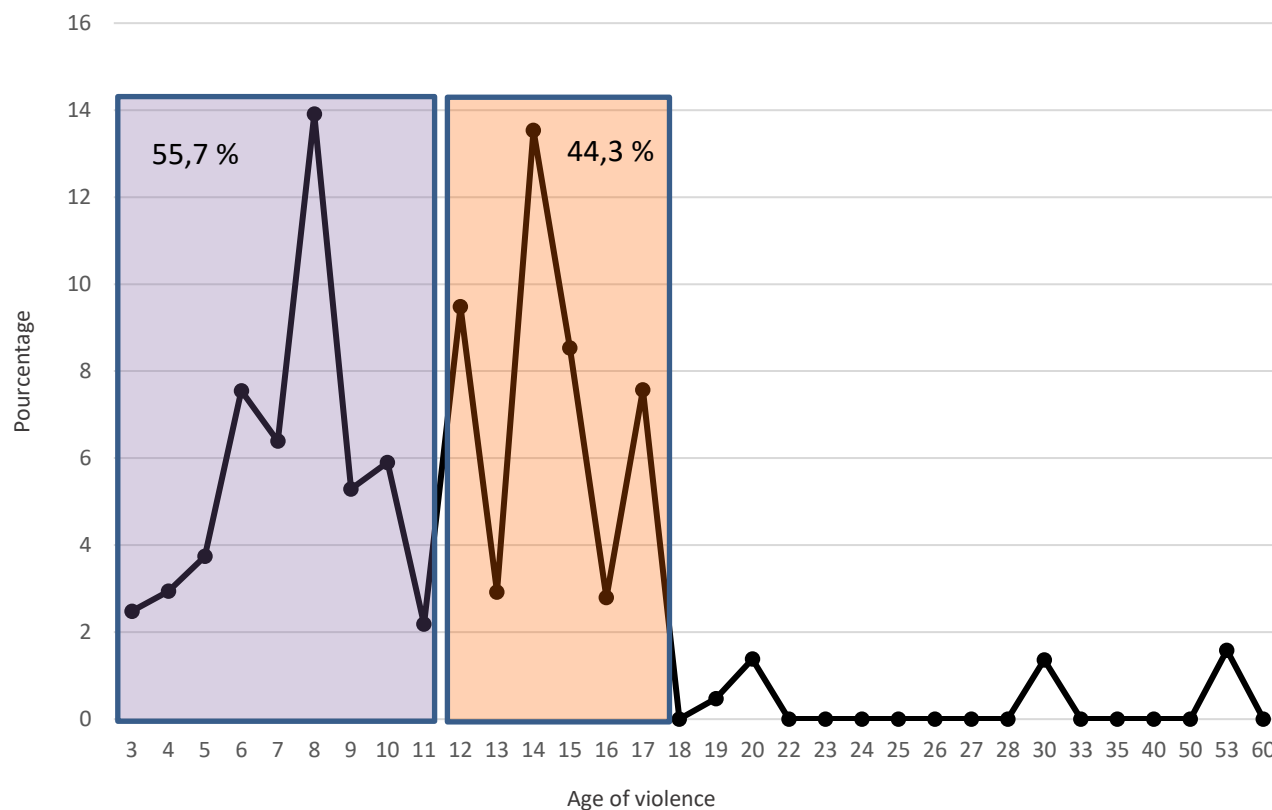
Coverage: Men aged 20 to 69 living in metropolitan France, having declared sexual violence in the family and close social circle and having declared an age of violence.

Interpretation: 6.1% of men reporting sexual violence in the family and close social circle declare that it occurred or began at the age of 10.

Different forms of age domination according to age of violence

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Different forms of age domination according to age of violence

- Power relations are not quite the same

Table 1: Perpetrators of sexual violence grouped by sex and approximate age, according to the age of men at time of violence (%)

	0-11 years	12-17 years
Adult men perpetrators	57,7	27,8
<i>Adult men within the family</i>	46,3	6,9
<i>Adult men outside the family</i>	11,4	20,9
Other perpetrators	42,3	72,2
Total	100,0	100,0

Source: Ined, Virage survey, 2015. Weighted percentages.

Coverage: Men aged 20-69 living in metropolitan France who reported sexual violence before the age of 18 in the family and close social circle.

Interpretation: Among men who reported sexual violence in the family and close social circle aged 0-11, 57.7% report that it was perpetrated by an adult man, compared with 27.8% of men who experienced violence aged 12-17.

Differences are significant at the 5% level (Chi-2 test).

Different forms of age domination according to age of violence

- Childhood
 - Gender and age dominations are connected
 - Liked to family hierarchies
- Teenage years
 - Sociability spaces (school, hobbies, sexual and romantic experiences) and socialisation between men
 - Benoît, assaulted by a teenager who lived at home between 15 and 16 years old
 - Johan, forced to masturbation in front of other teenagers at boarding school (13-14 years old)
 - Clement, first sexual intercourse at 13, physical, without consent and love
 - Not a large age difference, but still age domination
 - Two subgroups
 - Contexts of collective socialisation between men
 - + Forced collective masturbation, school harassment
 - + Heterosexuals' (and bisexuals') men
 - Beginning of same-sex experiences
 - + Principally gay men
 - + Gender, masculinity, sexuality and age relation

Different forms of age domination according to age of violence

- Difference according to the age of exposure
 - Age of violence
 - Process of qualification and enunciation
 - Childhood: identify more easily as “violence”
 - Teenage years: difficulty to speak of “violence”
 - + “Confusion” or “non-consent situations that are not really violence” (Vaillancourt-Morel *et al.*, 2019)
 - › Protection of the whole LGBT community?
 - › Limiting impact on the already subordinated masculinity? (Connell, 2005)
 - › Context of sexualisation of the age gap?

The family: a space for (re)production of violence and silence against boys

- Undermined the ideal image of the family as a place of protection and solidarity (Jaspard and Brown, 2003; Eribon, 2012; Eberhard and Rabaud, 2013; Trachman and Lejbowicz, 2020)
- Differences in status in the family, even when the age difference is not big

He didn't force it, but I still had, I don't know, a kind of moral obligation to listen to my older brother. I mean, I was still too young to understand and realise what was going on.

Bastien, 39, raped between the ages of 11 and 15 by his older brother, 4 years older

- Psychological and physical violence are not necessary
- Other forms of violence
 - Higher-vulnerability for boys
 - Overexposure to violence in childhood
 - It contributes to exposure of sexual violence

The family: a space for (re)production of violence and silence against boys

- Power relations within the family encourage practices of silencing (Doston, 2011)
 - Voices of children have not the same legitimacy as adults
 - No communication at all

Do you remember to talk to your parents when you were young?

I don't remember that we were discussing, I remember more the martinet!

Florian, 43 years old, assaulted and raped between the ages of 5 and 13 by his adoptive older brother; a close friend of his parents; and a head of the scouts

- Difficulties to speak out, especially with experiences of other forms of violence
- Differences in status between the boys and the other members of the family contribute to their silence
 - Indifference for the children's voice: practices of silencing

The family: a space for (re)production of violence and silence against boys

- Socio-historical context as a factor of sexual violence and practices of silencing

→ More visible for the oldest generations

*I could imagine that in my family, **how do you want me to speak about this? I couldn't say much, so... and to say something like that, I don't even know how it would have been heard.***

Martial, 60 years old, raped between the ages of 10 and 12 by a music teacher (45 years old) and between the ages of 11 and 13 by boys 2 years older

→ Age domination: a part of social structures, historically situated

The family: a space for (re)production of violence and silence against boys

- Social organisation gives little credit to children's voices
- Absence of spaces to talk about violence (and taken seriously)

*We were a bit like unlucky kids, and well unlucky kids, **we don't really care** about them, and then **they keep quiet about these kinds of things... they know very well that they won't be believed...** [...] **Today**, there are lots of [support services]... **a child can say some things**, even if it's not easy. They know that there are small loopholes, they can do phone numbers, they can tell someone, that it's a subject that is no longer... well, that is a little less taboo. But **at my time...***

Martial, 60 years old, raped between the ages of 10 and 12 by a music teacher (45 years old) and between the ages of 11 and 13 by boys 2 years older

The family: a space for (re)production of violence and silence against boys

- Practices of silencing form a system of domination towards those who experience violence
 - Possibility of being heard is a measure of political power (Dotson, 2011): children's voices are impossible
 - A factor of vulnerability for boys
 - A contribution to the perpetuation of violence
- Absence of spaces to talk about violence accentuate by
 - Family hierarchies
 - Absence of sexuality education or consent
 - Language available to put words to violence

Conclusion

- Violence against men adults or boys on other boys as a power dynamics according to age
- Different levels of age domination
 - Interpersonal or situational
 - Middle level (family)
 - Macro level (society or culture)
- Violence exposure, practices of silencing, speaking out = a pathway of violence
 - Better understanding of “violence” in general
 - Situated in a personal life history
 - Situated in a socio-historical context



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Thank you for listening!

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